

Testimony in support of HB 268
January 24, 2007

Chairman Stoker and members of the committee, for the record my name is Kim Center.

In April 2003 I saw my doctor for a persistent side ache. An ultrasound detected a mass on my left ovary. My doctor requested a CA125 blood test. This test is used to screen for ovarian cancer. The test results were positive and elevated. My physician recommended that I go to the cancer center in Salt Lake City for surgery. I was scared. My fear that I had cancer was increased by the fact that my father was undergoing treatment for renal cell carcinoma (kidney cancer) and my mother had a breast removed that same month due to breast cancer.

My husband and I met with the surgeon and discussed the surgical procedure, removal of the cyst, the left ovary and possibly removing the right ovary since it also had a smaller cyst. I requested that the surgeon save my right ovary if possible, but "do what you have to do to save my life". Our children were only 11 and 8 years old at the time. There was no discussion about the long term effects of removing an ovary and the subsequent decrease in hormones. Intuitively, I knew at age 42 I still needed my ovaries and the hormones they produced. There was also no discussion of what other condition I could have or other possible treatments besides surgery.

The surgery went well and the surgeon's news was good. I did not have cancer. I had Endometriosis...and he had performed a complete hysterectomy.

I was shocked. We had not discussed the possibility of a hysterectomy pre-surgery. My first question was, "What do I do now?" meaning hormones. His answer was, "We don't know." He suggested I try Black Cohash and soy supplementation for menopausal symptoms. Estrogen and Hormone Replacement Therapy (HRT) was not recommended because it may cause residual endometrial tissue to grow on other abdominal organs.

Endometriosis is a problem many women have during their childbearing years when their estrogen levels are high. The tissue that lines the uterus also starts growing outside the uterus. It can cause infertility and severe pain in some women, but it usually is not dangerous. Some women, like myself, have no pain and don't even know they have it. When women enter menopause and their estrogen levels drop, symptoms of endometriosis usually go away.

It was disheartening to read my operative report. "The cervix had several small...cysts, but otherwise was normal. The uterus had...adhesions from the ovaries, but otherwise was normal." So why were these organs removed? The surgeon's response was "you won't have to worry about cervical cancer." I don't have a family history of cervical cancer! I was denied the right to make an informed decision whether to remove those organs or not.

For the next 3 months I experienced severe hot flashes, insomnia, subsequent fatigue and depression. This affected not only me, but my husband and children. It was difficult for them to see me crying all the time. My OBGyn prescribed estrogen to relieve the symptoms.

For the next 6 months I had migraine headaches possibly from the replacement hormones. I spent hundreds of dollars on doctors visits, medications, and therapists. They prescribed anti-depressants. My husband and I went through marriage counselling - I wanted a divorce. I was unable to concentrate or complete a task. I had trouble articulating words. I became a deplorable money manager - bills went unpaid, overdraft fees and interest charges mounted. I couldn't understand what was wrong with me. My productivity dropped significantly and my business suffered. I had to end client relationships I had for several years.

One year later I quit all medication and therapy. I prayed the Lord would get me through this difficult time. I began going to a Bible Study. I'm a fighter. My body needed time to adjust to lower hormone levels and recover from the shock of losing a whole organ system.

Now, almost 3 years later I battle weight gain, recurring UTIs (bladder infections), vaginal dryness and irritation. I worry about my increased risk of heart disease and osteoporosis. I have no sex drive, reduced sensitivity, and can no longer climax during sex with my husband. Every day I grieve the loss of my sexuality.

I'm angry that I was treated worse than a repeat sex offender. A May 1997 article on Reporter-news.com about castration of sexual predators states "many people argue that castration is cruel and unusual punishment for repeat sex offenders...Convicted molesters must request the operation (castration) in writing and undergo psychological evaluation."

I was castrated. My sex organs were removed without my written consent.

Don't get me wrong. I am so thankful we have knowledgeable physicians and skilled surgeons. I hope one will be available should I have a life threatening illness or emergency.

In conclusion, I want something positive to come out of this situation. I want to insure that other women and men are properly informed about medical procedures, and insure they are given their right to decide whether or not to remove any body part(s). I urge you to support House Bill 268.

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